

SAGEBRUSH HEADLIGHT

VOL. 14, NO. 3, 60th Edit. NEWSLETTER OF THE NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM FALL 1993



Virginia & Truckee Locomotive No. 25 under steam at the Nevada State Railroad Museum on July 4, 1993. *Daun Bohall Photo*

AROUND THE MUSEUM

Steam locomotive No. 8 remains in the shop undergoing major boiler repair. Due to scheduling difficulties and the number of pieces involved, the shop crew has devoted an enormous amount of time to the movement of the Heber Collection from Heber City, UT to Boulder City, NV. The move was finished at the end of October, and work has begun again on No. 8. The following is a *partial* list of the rolling stock acquired and does not include shop equipment, tools or spare parts:

Locomotives:

Union Pacific 2-8-0 #264
 Union Pacific NW-2 diesel electric #1000
 U.S. Army H12-44 diesel electric #1855
 (from Herlong, CA, army base)
 Pacific Lumber 2-8-2 #35
 Weyerhaeuser Timber 2-6-6-2T #110
 Sacramento Valley & Eastern 2-6-2T #2
 Yosemite Lumber 3-truck Shay #4

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Virginia & Truckee Railroad Accused of Attempted Murder

The front page of the June 18, 1993 edition of the Comstock Chronical, Voice of the Comstock reports:

"Late last week Pierre Bares - he of the sensitive hearing - burst into DA Virgil Bucchaineri's office and demanded that Bob Gray, head of the V&T Railroad, be arrested for attempted murder. Bares claimed that the "irresponsible operation of the locomotive whistle" had caused him to suffer "ischemia" (which he claimed could lead to "Sudden Death Ischemia Heart Disease").

In a subsequent letter written to President Clinton, the Nevada Attorney General, the District Attorney, the County Commissioners and Bob Gray (but not the Governor "because he will not answer a previous one"), Bares says of this train whistle blowing "I cannot see how this may differ from attempted murder by Bob Gray and the V&T knowingly allowed by the Storey County Commission and the District Attorney. Clearly criminal behavior is taking place at my expense."

Bares had to be asked to leave Bucchaineri's office by a deputy after he started screaming at the DA when he refused to press murder charges. [Question: If this, by all accounts high decibel, screaming had brought on his ischemia, resulting in his death, would Bares be listed as a suicide? Ed]"

Bares filed a formal nuisance complaint on June 17, in a written complaint co-signed by five others. The complaint described the nuisance as: "excessive blowing of steam locomotive whistle by V&T Railroad engineers, so that the same interferes with the comfortable enjoyment of our property." Bares also made the Public Service Commission aware of his concerns and requested an inspection of the railroads' operating practices.

In response to the complaint, a Public Service Commission inspection was made, and the railroad was cited for *not blowing the whistle long enough* at grade crossings. At a July 20 meeting, the Storey County Commissioners resolved that they did not have jurisdiction over this matter, and to this day whistle blowing in Virginia City continues unabated.

NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM
2180 S. Carson St., Carson City, NV 89710
702-687-6953

*Open Wednesday through Sunday, 8:30 to 4:30
Admission, \$2.00, children under 18 free*

AROUND THE MUSEUM

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Rolling Stock:

Union Pacific Harriman baggage-postal car #2314
Union Pacific Harriman modernized chair car #414
Union Pacific Harriman coach O-WR&N #926
Union Pacific Harriman coach OSL #1342
Union Pacific Harriman coach OSL #1337
4 Southern Pacific Harriman Coaches #'s ?
Union Pacific streamlined dining car #4813
Union Pacific streamlined club-lounge-dorm #6100
Union Pacific wood side, steel underframe box car
Western Pacific Hart selective ballast dump car
Kennecott 5000 gal tank car #19
UP wood side, steel underframe caboose #3505
SP wood side, steel underframe caboose #604
Kennecott Jordan spreader #5

V&T steam locomotive No. 25 operated for the scheduled steam-ups, and will finish out the season Santa Train weekend before being put back on exhibit.

Again this summer, the Railroad Museum participated in the Job Opportunities In Nevada program providing a work site for two youths from the community. JOIN is a federally subsidised program that provides disadvantaged youth valuable on-the-job training and work experience. Both kids did a terrific job.

NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM 1993 OPERATING SCHEDULE

STEAM TRAIN:

May 29, 30 & 31 *Memorial Day weekend*
June 19 & 20 *Fathers Day weekend*
July 3, 4 & 5 *Fourth of July weekend*
July 24 & 25
August 7 & 8
August 21 & 22
September 4, 5 & 6 *Labor Day weekend*
October 23 & 24 *Symposium Weekend*
December 11 & 12 *Santa Train*

MOTOR CAR:

Memorial Day - Labor Day: Friday, Saturday & Sunday 10:00 - 4:00
September: Saturday & Sunday 12:00 - 4:00

SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

FOR MORE INFORMATION PHONE (702)687-6953

MUSEUM SERVICES REPORT

by Bryan Berry

Volunteer assignments are going quite well. We have twenty jobs to fill each week, with some jobs, such as tour guides, requiring 2 or more people at a time. Our base of volunteers stands at 45 and we attempt to maintain our scheduling a month in advance, but always need more good people. We set assignments based on when, where and how much an individual wishes to work, so if you're interested in a fun job, give us a call at 687-6953.

We are always looking for new members for the *Friends*. Benefits of membership include:

- membership certificate and card
- Sagebrush Headlight newsletter
- Nevada State Museum newsletter
- free museum admission
- 15% discount in museum store
- Historical Society Quarterly (memberships \$25.00 and over)

The Nelson House (located immediately south of the depot, on the museum complex) is finally starting to take shape on the inside. The back bedroom is complete, except for electrical, and by the time this newsletter goes to press, the *Friends* will be in and using the house. Work so far has been done by our excellent *Friends* Bert Humphries, Harry Leonard and Bob Flammang. You all deserve a "well done" for your work and dedication. They are all working elsewhere in the museum as well. As a point of information, the Nelson House consists of a front room, front bedroom and bathroom which will be turned into an interpretive display by the museum. The back bedroom (which will be used as the *Friends* office) and the kitchen (to be used as a break room for the train crews) are being cleaned up, painted etc. by the *Friends* mentioned above.

"SAGEBRUSH HEADLIGHT" newsletter is published jointly by the Nevada State Railroad Museum and the *Friends* of the Nevada State Railroad Museum and distributed to the membership as part of their annual dues.

EDITORIAL BOARD

John Ballweber, Curator

Nevada State Railroad Museum

Terry Ward, President

Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum

The *Friends* and the Museum would like to take this opportunity to welcome all new members of the *Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum* who have joined as of July 29:

John & Cathy Amundson, Mike Beamer, David Bernard, Suzanne Brunette, Bob Claybrook, Gordon Crowell, Daryl DiBitonto, Robert Gaw, Jeremy Harding, Jack & Janet Heller, John Huie, Bert & Nancy Humphries, David Johnson, John Johnson, Brian Leppert, Todd Moore, Linda Morsani, Joshua Patterson, Lee Pisiewski, R.A. Puryear, Richard & Chloe Robinson, Albert Saunders, John Smith, Andrew & Gail Spieker, Thomas Waddell, Fr. Harry Walrath, Charles Wayne, Sr., G.R. Wilson.

The following *Friends* are to be congratulated for passing the safety test and are/or soon will be working on the motor car and steam train crews:

Daryl DiBitonto, Bob Flammang, Bert Humphries, Harry Leonard, Todd Moore, Hugh Smith, John Smith, George Voitoff.

For those interested in volunteering on operating crews, you may purchase a rule book at the museum store, study it thoroughly, and call John Ballweber, Curator at 687-6953 to schedule a safety test.



FRIENDS OF THE NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Executive Committee

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702-673-3356

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Secretary: Joe Torsitano

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702-887-5712

Correspondence to the *Friends* may be sent to:

Friends of NSRM

P.O. Box 1330

Carson City, NV 89702

BOARD OF TRUSTEES meets on 2nd Thursday of every other month at 6:00 pm in the Jacobsen Interpretive Center on the museum grounds. Members and other interested parties are encouraged to attend.

BOARD MEETINGS: June 10, August 12, October 22 (General Membership and Annual Reports), and December 9, 1993.



Virginia City ca. 1876. V&T depot and yards are visible near the center of the image. Zene Walmsley Collection, courtesy Arthur D. Haig, California State Railroad Museum

THE VIRGINIA & TRUCKEE RAILROAD'S LAST PASSENGER DEPOT AND GENERAL OFFICES AT VIRGINIA CITY, NEVADA *By Stephen E. Drew*

The Virginia & Truckee's last passenger depot and general offices in Virginia City were the eastern-most terminus of the Bonanza short line. Operated by the V&T from 1876 until 1938, the depot was the third in a succession of V&T passenger facilities at Virginia City, and was also general offices and designated corporate headquarters for the railroad for 20 years. Briefly recounting the two predecessor structures is helpful in understanding the placement and function of the V&T's third and final passenger depot and general offices on the Comstock Lode.

When the iron rails of the fledgling Virginia & Truckee Railroad Company extended from Carson City to Virginia City in 1870, the line's first

passenger depot was a wood frame building on the south side of E Street between Flowery and Washington Streets -- at the south end of the future E Street tunnel.¹

In 1872, the V&T began laying plans and buying property to extend the terminus of the line farther north towards a new depot in the heart of Virginia City. In 1873, a new wood frame passenger depot and general offices opened along the east side of the tracks between Union Street and Sutton Avenue, and a freight warehouse was constructed directly opposite on the west side of the V&T's E Street tracks. Outfitted with gas lights, the two-year-old structures were demolished in the Great Virginia City Fire of October 26, 1875.²

The president and majority owner of V&T stock was financier Darius Ogden Mills (1825-1910) in San Francisco; the senior resident V&T manager was Canadian-born general superintendent and later V&T vice president Henry Marvin Yerington (1829-1910). Some 40 years worth of surviving letters between Yerington and Mills provide rich insight into the early operation and management of the Virginia & Truckee. Writing to Mills on October 29, three days after the Great Virginia City Fire, Yerington remarked:

I am busy getting plans out and bills of timber for the warehouse for we are in great trouble for want of it, as

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nearly every private warehouse in the city was destroyed. On looking over the ground yesterday morning it struck me it would be well for us to place our offices and depot where the warehouse formerly stood and thus avoid the necessity of passengers crossing our tracks and as there is a splendid block of ground to the north of the car shed lots, near the end of Ophir trestle and of easy grade for teams to haul up on D and C Streets. This block is 410 feet long and is owned principally by parties willing to sell reasonably. Now if the Consolidated Virginia would buy the land where our offices stood and we took the money and bought this 410 feet there we would own all the land between Union Street and Mill Street on the west side of E Street. Then if Consolidated Virginia would buy our 190 feet where offices stood and also the lots north of them to Mill Street then the two companies would own all the land on both sides of E Street, have plenty of room to do our business in etc., etc. Yesterday A.M. I suggested this to James G. Fair and both he and John W. Mackey are anxious for it. They ought to pay \$6500 for our 190 feet (it cost us \$4200) and I think we can get the 410 feet for about \$8500...The poverty and distress in Virginia is very great and every exertion is being made to help the poor people...³

Effective November 29, 1875, the site of the V&T's second Virginia City passenger depot was sold to the adjoining Consolidated Virginia Mining Company and the old passenger depot at the south end of the E Street Tunnel was briefly pressed back into service. A new 31 x 98 foot wood frame passenger depot and general offices was constructed during late 1875 and early 1876 on the west side of E Street between Union Street and Sutton Avenue -- on the site of the earlier V&T freight warehouse. Site grading was commenced during a wet November 1875 and construction of the 3,038-square-foot structure and 111-1/2

foot long wood platform was completed by May 1, 1876, for the inauguration of through "Lightning Express" passenger trains between San Francisco and Virginia City. Within months, the ravages of the disastrous October 1875 Virginia City fire had been replaced by substantial new structures.

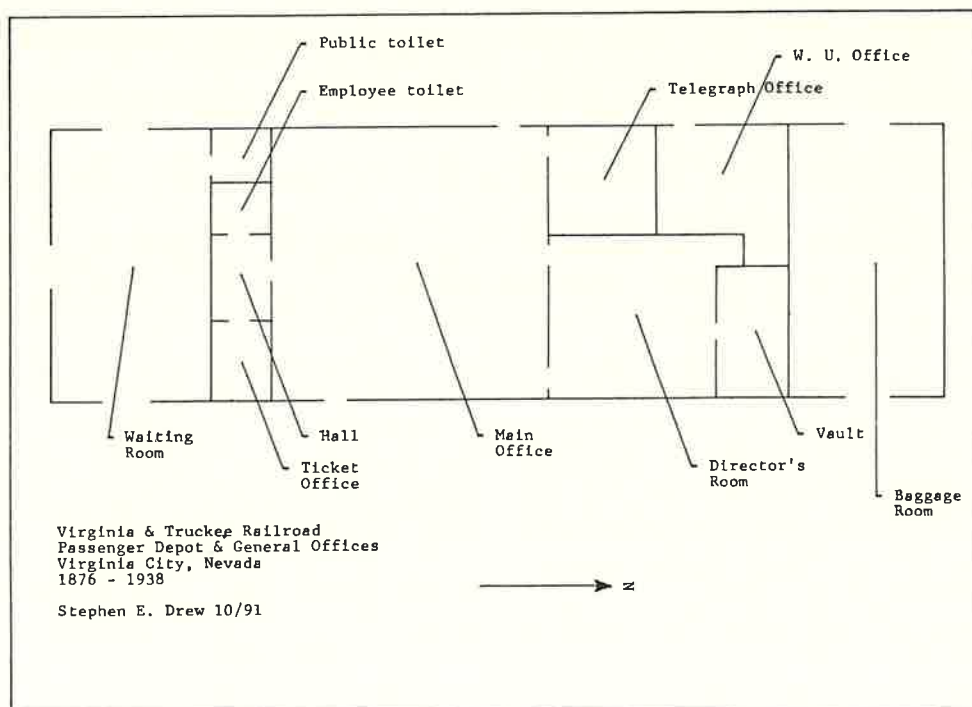
The design of the third passenger depot and general offices mirrored the architecture of similar Virginia & Truckee structures. Surviving architectural drawings and materials lists provide a unique insight into the design, construction and use of the facility.⁴

The building framing was rough pine with 8 x 8 inch sills set on 10 x 10 inch masonry footings. Two by sixes comprised the basic framing with studs spaced 12 inches on center. The exterior was painted redwood board with milled batten sheathing and a profusion of double-hung window sets. Conventional office doors were augmented with oversize public waiting and baggage room doors following the design of the V&T's larger passenger station down at Carson City. The roof was wood shingles and the

surrounding station platform consisted of 3-inch decking square-nailed to 6 x 6 inch sleepers. The interior was primarily yellow-pine construction with period moldings. Traditional beaded tongue and groove wainscot rose halfway up plastered lath walls, and the flooring was 3-inch tongue and groove throughout.

The interior of the depot and general offices was divided into thirteen distinct rooms. Four rooms had direct public access and use: the station waiting room, the baggage room of 1870s station baggagemaster Albert Meekins, the Western Union telegraph office, and a public toilet. The remaining spaces were devoted to V&T employees and the building's function as a terminus passenger station and corporate office in what was the metropolis and largest community then served by the Virginia & Truckee Railroad. The single largest room in the building was the central office, with doors opening to the adjoining employee offices: the ticket agent's office, a hall, and employee toilet on the south end; and the telegraph office, director's board room and walk-in vault to the north. The high-security

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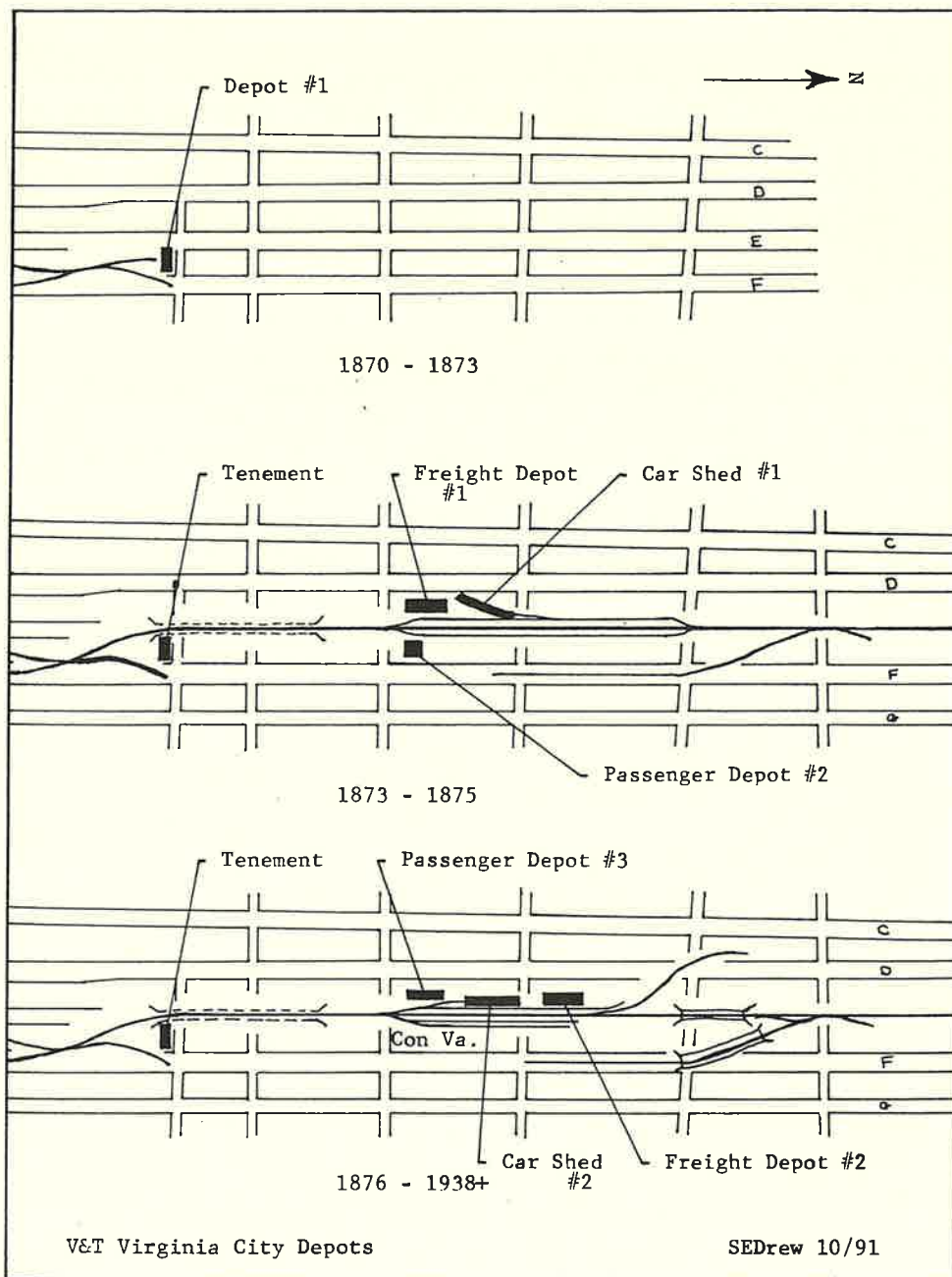


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vault was accessible only through the director's board room.

During the 1869-1870 construction of the V&T, Henry Yerington was superintendent of construction at the Carson end and business associate Duane LeRoy Bliss (1833-1907) was at the Virginia City end. After the opening of the line, Yerington remained at Carson City and became V&T general superintendent and later vice president.⁵ The senior V&T official in the 1876 passenger depot and general offices at Virginia City was the corporate secretary. In 1877, the secretary's compensation was \$250 per month. The longest incumbent was H.M. Yerington's eldest son, Edward Boucher Yerington (1859-1924), who succeeded William M. Thornton and served from 1881 until 1896 when he moved down to Carson City.

At Virginia City, the V&T secretary received and recorded daily cash reports from all station agents and passenger conductors on the line. The 22-inch thick concrete walls of the 4 x 10 foot walk-in safe held the day's receipts until they were deposited with the nearby agency of the Bank of California up on C Street. Several V&T office clerks compiled the monthly financial and regulatory reports and helped the secretary keep track of the enormous monthly paper workload of bills, drafts and vouchers. Beginning in 1876, literally tons of routine financial papers and correspondence were annually accumulated and retained in the wood structure. During the 1870s, well-known V&T clerks like John Burnes in the all-male office often worked late into the evening to enter and balance the accounts of the day's business on the road. In addition to his V&T responsibilities, the secretary performed similar corporate duties for the Carson & Colorado Railroad and dozens of similarly affiliated



D.O. Mills, Wm. Sharon and H.M. Yerington mining and other business ventures throughout Nevada and eastern California.

The director's board room was the site of the V&T's monthly board of directors meeting, where policy was set and handsome stock dividends of up to \$130,000 were approved monthly during the railroad's early years. The full V&T board comprised nine directors and most served consecutive annual terms. Of the V&T's 62 all-time directors, the average

term was 12-½ years during the line's operating years. The board room was also the site of the V&T's annual stockholders' meetings, which were specified by company bylaws to be held on the second Tuesday of each May, although the actual date varied.

A V&T telegraph operator handled unusual train dispatching needs as well as the railroad's regular "franked" telegraph transmissions. An adjoining public area and telegraph window

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*V&T Passenger Depot, Virginia City, Nevada.
From glass plate. Stephen E. Drew Collection*



*V&T Sub Depot, Virginia City, April 1938.
Gilbert Kniess Photo. Stephen E. Drew Collection*

permitted the receipt and transmission of telegraph messages by Comstock residents over the wires of the Western Union Company. One of the longest incumbents was Paul R. Ryan, who served as wood and ticket agent and later telegraph operator for more than 20 years beginning in the mid 1870s.

For a local populace of some 40,000, the Virginia City Depot was a focal point of community activity. The who's who of the west were carried

aboard the V&T-CP San Francisco-Virginia City express trains, and local newspaper columns carried the names of prominent personalities arriving and departing the E Street depot. The passenger depot was also the terminus for literally tons of mail, express and baggage arriving daily at Virginia City via the railroad.

Understanding the history of most Virginia & Truckee equipment and structures entails sorting through a myriad

of changes, compromises, improvements and other alterations over decades of use. The V&T's third passenger depot and general offices at Virginia City is one of the few exceptions: it functioned 62 years largely unaltered from its opening in 1876 until the depot was closed in May 1938. Minor visible exterior changes included the conversion for gas to electric lights, the removal of ornate chimney jacks and the rebuilding of the depot platform in 1892. As the building aged and V&T revenues decreased, vice president Yerington was successful in gradually beating down Storey County's valuation of the building for tax purposes from \$9,000 in 1880 to only \$3,207 for tax year 1887/88. A new 4-inch water line was jointly installed in 1886 by the V&T and the adjoining Consolidated Virginia Mining Company for firefighting and office use.

The structure was periodically repainted in-kind. Originally finished in a yellow-creme with chocolate-brown trim -- the early exterior passenger depot paint standard adopted by both the V&T and adjoining Central Pacific Railroad -- the building received complete repainting in 1891, 1904 and 1912. The enormity of the task can be appreciated by the materials list employed in the July 1904 repainting which totaled 58 gallons of paint! One innovative drawing proposed converting the building to a combination passenger and freight depot with a partially raised platform and floor like the V&T's Empire and Franktown stations, but the conversion never materialized.

After the V&T's corporate office was changed to Carson City in 1896 and the company secretary and clerical support staff moved from Storey down to Ormsby County, the third passenger depot and general offices became simply the V&T Virginia City passenger depot. Still, the through San Francisco passenger

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express pulled into the E Street passenger station in a much deserted Virginia City. Daily repeating a tradition begun decades earlier, the arriving passenger train unloaded its contents and the passenger coaches were shoved into the nearby car shed, which afforded protection from sun, rain, snow and other elements. After a several hour layover at Virginia City, the locomotive was turned, watered and fueled at the yards and then backed up to the passenger station to retrieve the coaches for the return departure to Carson City and Reno.

After a brief rise in traffic occasioned by the central Nevada Tonopah boom of the early 1900s, passenger traffic to and from Virginia City again began a steady decline. The Carson shops painted a new station board for the Virginia City depot in 1912. During the 1914 U.S. Interstate Commerce Commission valuation of the V&T, the Virginia City passenger depot was assigned a value new of \$6,939; its value less depreciation was \$4,818. When company telephones were installed, the phone lines went to the nearby V&T freight depot -- a block north of the passenger station.

During the 1920s, more



V&T Passenger Depot, Virginia City, 1924.

Stephen E. Drew Collection

economical gasoline motor cars, V&T Nos. 23 and 99, frequently augmented regular V&T steam trains arriving at the Virginia City passenger depot. The most popular of these cars was the 1917 White motor car No. 23, nicknamed the "Canary." Operating Railway Post Office service between Carson City and Virginia City concluded in 1929, and increasing highway competition took its toll as V&T ridership plummeted. When the Virginia & Truckee entered voluntary federal receivership on April 25, 1938, the abandonment of the little-used Carson City - Virginia City line was inevitable. The Virginia City passenger depot closed

in May 1938 and was almost immediately boarded up.

The Interstate Commerce Commission approved abandonment of the Carson City - Virginia City line on June 18, 1941, and the rails were torn up beginning in November. No longer needed, the V&T's third passenger depot at Virginia City was sold locally in 1945 and subsequently was dismantled on-site for its lumber.

Today, the site of the V&T's third passenger depot and general offices in Virginia City is vacant. The recent discovery of complete plans for the 1876 E Street passenger depot, together with interest in extending the tracks of the new V&T through the old E Street tunnel, may one day permit reconstruction of this important, historic Virginia & Truckee structure.



V&T Passenger Depot, Virginia City, March 1932.
David Joslyn Photo. Stephen E. Drew Collection

¹ The original Virginia passenger depot was on Lot No. 2 of Block No. 147 in Virginia City. The V&T purchased the land from the Gould & Curry Silver Mining Company for \$4,200. The 20' 4" wide x 75' long wood frame depot had 6' wide platforms on the south and west

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sides; like the Carson City passenger depot, it was painted creme with brown trim. When the new depot opened north of the E Street Tunnel in late 1873, the old structure was rented as a multi-family tenement dwelling and office building. It is referred to in V&T records as the "old depot," and "sub-depot." In August 1938, the V&T agreed to sell the building to Frank Lazzeri of Virginia City for \$200 plus a \$6-per-year ground lease. It was shortened 25' on the east end in 1967 during renovation by contractor and owner Arsene Clouatre; the building is presently painted red with white trim.

² The V&T's second or "new passenger depot" at Virginia City was located on

Lots Nos. 9, 10 and 11 of Block No. 87 next to a saloon. The parcels were purchased between October 1872 and February 1873 and the lumber for the building was ordered in July 1873. Station water service was handled by a 4" line negotiated in a June 1874 contract with the nearby Consolidated Virginia Mining Company. The freight warehouse was a 40 x 100 foot wood frame structure.

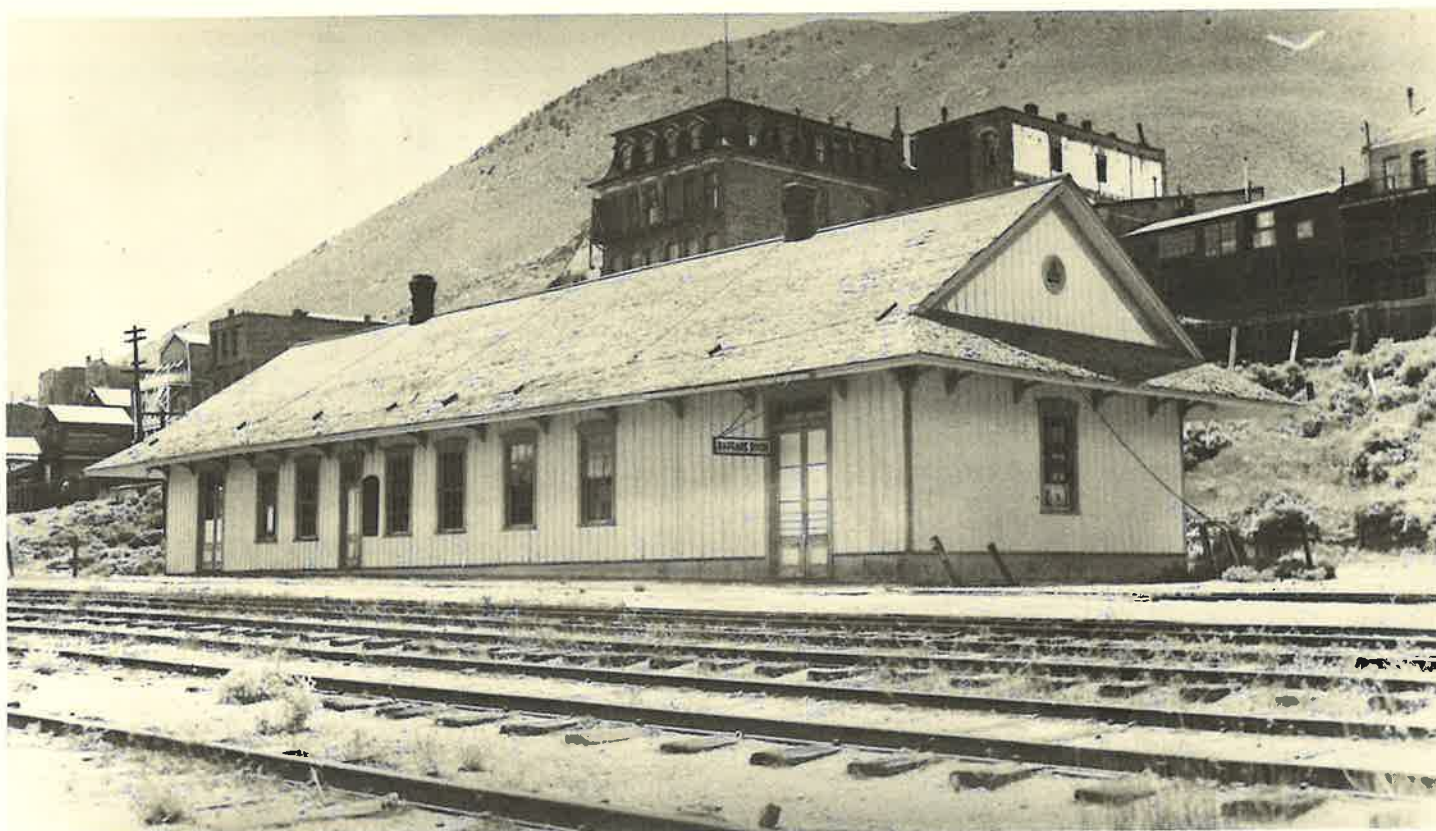
³ H.M. Yerington to D.O. Mills, October 29, 1875. Typescript from Nevada State Railroad Museum collection. Original letter in private collection.

⁴ Author's collection, Sacramento.

⁵ D.L. Bliss. *Data Concerning the Virginia & Truckee Railroad, and Those Who Planned and Carried Out That Work, 1887.*

Typescript. The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Stephen E. Drew is Senior Curator of the California State Railroad Museum in Old Sacramento. He has been a student of V&T history for more than twenty-five years. This paper was originally presented at the 1991 Virginia & Truckee Symposium at Carson City, Nevada and has been carefully edited for publication by John Ballweber.



V&T Passenger Depot, Virginia City, June 5, 1938. Paul Darrell Collection. California State Railroad Museum

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NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM
Capitol Complex
Carson City, Nevada 89710

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(reflecting new combined program)
RENEWABLE ANNUALLY

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MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO
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Thank you for membership. You will be receiving
your membership packet in the mail (not included with renewals):

In addition to memberships, the Friends accepts tax deductible contributions towards
the furthering of Museum activities and goals.